

Peace-in-Difference: A phenomenological approach to peace through difference

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Abstract

This paper develops the notion of “peace-in-difference”, based on a phenomenological approach to difference from German sociology in the 1920s to the French philosophies of Emmanuel Lévinas and Jacques Derrida. Such an attempt responds to a long-standing concern in peacebuilding theory and practice and is critical of essentialist and linear-teleological approaches to peace, as with the theoretical framework of liberal peace-building. As a consequence, “peace-in-difference” is sceptical with attempts to define peace as a status, but rather envisions peace as a perennial process of dialogue. However, “peace-in-difference”, even though having the critique of liberal peace and subsequent research questions in common with post-liberal approaches, it is also critical with their construction of “the local” as a binary opposition to “the international”. Though this binary is an attempt to overcome liberal legacies in International Relations (IR) and peace studies, it nevertheless risks reintroducing essentialism. In contrast, a phenomenological approach infers a positive understanding of difference(s) which can be generative of peace, if and when perceived in non-essentialist ways and negotiated as such.

Keywords: difference, de-essentialization, temporality, Lévinas, Derrida, peace-in-difference, critical peace studies

The problem and the argument

This paper responds to a long-standing pressing issue and question in peace-building theory and practice, namely that of difference (see *inter alia* Avruch 1998; Avruch, Black 1991; Lederach 1997; Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse 1999; Bargués-Pedreny 2017; newer attempts see also the papers in this Issue; in IR more generally see *inter alia* Inayatullah/Blaney 2004; Hallam/Street 2000; Gupta/Chattopadhyaya 1998). The multitude of attempts to engage the question of difference seems to be reasoned, just like this paper, by the incontestable, empirical circumstance that differences, whether religious, social, political, economic, etc. are at the root of conflicts. The specific argument pursued here suggests perceiving of difference(s) in a non-essentialised way as this seems to be the only way to view, and to act upon, differences which is conducive to peaceful relations. This is because all essentialist or essentialising perceptions of difference establish a hierarchy of subordination and inherent violence which trigger resistance, conflict, and fighting. In its consequence, this argument thus ultimately holds that conflicts are stimulated, maybe even caused, precisely by essentialising perceptions of difference and of respective identities. This argument is based on a phenomenological reading of the problem of difference which sees the issue of difference and the question of 'otherness'¹ as irreducible, experiential foundations of all social and political relations and suggests that a non-essentialised and normative understanding of difference(s) can render difference a positive social and political force.²

¹ Here and throughout the paper, 'otherness', the 'other', and 'self' are written in single inverted comas to indicate that they are social and political identity constructions and no ontic entities.

² See also Lévinas, "Peace and Proximity" (1996c [1984]) which, however, did not yet generate much discussion of a phenomenological approach to peace. A phenomenological approach should not be confused or likened with post-structuralism or post-modernism (not at least because both

A phenomenological approach to peace begins with the notion that whether we as individuals, citizens, political activists, politicians, or most importantly as conflict parties act in a peaceful way, or less so, depends on our relation to our fellow humans. Thus peace always articulates (as) a relation to the 'other'. Yet, the question of our relation to the 'other' includes another question, namely that of difference. Consequently, issues around peace are to be thought of as questions of difference. Whether, or not, we act in a peaceful way is therefore a question of how we approach, think, and negotiate difference(s). The first argument developed in this paper is that non-essentialist ways of thinking and acting upon difference(s) are more conducive to peaceful relations than essentialised versions of difference. The second, and subsequent argument holds that in practical terms a non-essentialist way of dealing with difference surmounts in the maxim of political dialogue, a dialogue that embraces differences and steadily attempts to de-essentialise them. I call this programme "peace-in-difference" which is presented here in its first step as a theoretical outline.³ This approach contributes to the literature in peace and conflict studies that is

Lévinas and Derrida in many interviews tirelessly and sometimes fiercely emphasised this difference and protested against any form of appropriation). The reason for this distinction lies in phenomenologists' more explicit elaboration of own assumptions and in their subsequent normative approach to politics and questions of meaning (see essentially hereto Heidegger, "Platon: Sophistes" [1919-1944]), a dimension which post-structuralism, at least in International Relations and Peace Studies, wilfully neglects or ignores; see representative of this neglect *inter alias* Campbell 1998; Richmond 2009, 2010; as well as critically Behr/Shani, "Critiquing critique in "critical IR": theory, ideology, knowledge claims and the problem of normativity" (forthcoming).

³ A fuller version of this approach would need to incorporate aspects of material and discursive power to further specify the experience and negotiation of difference(s) and the subsequent con-

critical of how difference has been so far treated in liberal peace framings and some of the post-liberal alternatives (see, for example, Nadarajah and Rampton 2015; Sabaratnam 2017), by first adding insights from phenomenology and secondly hinting at some reflections on how “peace-in-difference” could be practiced. The main contribution is thus not to make specific practical recommendations, but its purpose is to substantiate and guide the conversation in peace studies (and in this Special Issue) towards a de-essentialised understanding of difference that can facilitate peace. Such guidance and substantiation need careful consideration and development, therefore the mainly theoretical focus of this paper.

Peace as a question of difference sounds initially banal as peace articulates always as a relation to the ‘other’. The discussion of this relation leads us, however, to very complex issues. The question of our relation to the ‘other’ that underpins the conceptualization of peace bears another, ontologically preceding question, namely that of difference because otherness is always and already a specific articulation of the primary human experience of difference. When framing the question of peace as a question of difference, we have to deal with two main problems according to which the paper is structured: (1) The first problem relates to the legacy of thinking difference in Western philosophy and political theory. This discussion occupies the main part of this paper which understands itself as a theoretical outline of the basic contours of an original, namely phe-

struction of otherness. Such an incorporation, however, would go far beyond the scope of this paper. A promising direction could be found in complementing “peace-in-difference” with a realist concept of the political in a Morgenthauian sense (see Morgenthau 2012 and the Introduction to this edition by Behr/Roesch 2012) or with post-colonial studies of asymmetric power relations between ‘the’ West and ‘beyond the West’, their histories, legacies, and threads to humanity and security (see *inter alia* Shani 2014).

nomenological, approach to peace-building (following the foundation of this argument in Behr, 2014). (2) The second problem relates to the liberal legacy of how to think and deal with peace in peace studies and peace-building politics. The discussions of these two problems in sections (1) and (2) include alternative thinking to respective legacies in Western philosophy⁴ and political practices and thus attempts to contribute to a rethinking and reconceptualization of peace in peace studies and peace practices. In the conclusions, I will reflect on research questions for a further research agenda which emerge from the argument (and which are derived in the second section) and further contextualise them in current peace research.

(1) Thinking difference

When looking into modes of thinking difference as they have become handed down to us by Western philosophy, we learn that until recently, i.e., until the beginning of the 20th century, difference has been conceptualised as a hierarchical dependency between 'self' and 'other'. From Greek Antiquity to the beginning of the 20th century we find *cum grano salis* no philosophical or political conception of difference that would not assume or directly posit the 'self'-'other'-relation as a top down that requests the sub-ordination of the 'other' to, or the transformation and assimilation of the 'other' into, (the idea) of the 'self'.⁵ This has immediate consequences for how we

⁴ Maybe non-Western philosophy does suggest and offer different legacies, but that is not addressed here. However, see *inter alia* Galtung 1993; more empirical Thambia 1992.

⁵ In the legacies of Western political philosophy prior to the intellectual tradition of 'phenomenology' we can identify five historic patterns of thinking difference which, however, all establish some form of essentialism of, and hierarchical relation between, differences and are therefore, more or less, less tuned to violence and conflict. For a more detailed discussion, see Behr 2014.

think peace: peace is understood hierarchically, as the 'other' always has to submit to the imaginations and practices of the 'self', be that one of the conflict parties or an outside peace builder. This kind of peace can be called "imperial peace" to emphasise its vertical, imposing, subordinating, and thus always violent nature against the 'other' (for more details on this argument, see Behr 2014). A non-hierarchical approach to difference therefore seems the only way that is conducive to peace. Only then, it appears, peace thinking and peace practices do not demand the subordination of one actor to another actor's political imaginations and practices (as this is probably the reason for the outbreak of violence in the first place). The big challenge then lies in the question: *How can we conceptualise difference in a non-hierarchical and thus peaceful way?*

Exploring Western philosophy for approaches of how to think difference alternatively to orthodoxies, we strike a movement that we can summarise as phenomenology and that comprises in chronological order as its main authors Georg Simmel, Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schütz, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Jacques Derrida. What is characteristic of this movement (and why I group these authors together; see also Lévinas 1996a; Heidegger 2006, 2007) and what helps us thinking difference in a non-hierarchical way are the following two observations: first, phenomenologists emphasise that 'self' and 'other' are both interdependent and mutually constitutive constructions that are embedded in specific historic, political, economic, and cultural circumstances. They are subject to change and are and have no fixed or constant entities.⁶ Second,

⁶ Early 20th century phenomenologists, mainly sociologists, are thus the inventors of what has become mainstream in the discipline of International Relations only some 60 years later, namely "constructivism" and the focus on socially constructed norms to explain actor's behaviour.

underpinning such constructivist outlook is a specific notion of the temporal fabric⁷ of all political and social ‘things’. This implies, in short, that the meanings we give to these ‘things’ and that these ‘things’ have for us are perpetually transforming, transient and can only be grasped and understood in their passing articulations as these meanings change and be actively changed through their temporalization. With regard to understanding peace as “peace-in-difference” this means most importantly that difference(s) is/are not insurmountable obstacles based and fixed in assigned identities as ‘enemy’, ‘opponent’, ‘friend’ and ‘foe’, or in immobilised gender, race, or ethnicity roles. Rather differences are open to become transformed in their relations towards each other as actors can change their attitudes, behaviour, and perception as difference(s) become ne-

⁷ ‘Temporal’ and ‘temporality’ mean in the most basic sense the fluid and transformative (in contrast to an essentialised) ontological status of a thing that we become aware of through a proactive processuralization of its empirical appearances by unpacking and destabilizing its dynamics, ambiguities, disunities, and perspectives (see the more detailed discussions below, esp. on the activity of ‘temporization’ in Heidegger and Derrida). This understanding is critically different to how this term is used frequently in many contemporary social science debates on time that focus on and explore very importantly the historical, present, and future time dimension of politics as these discussions elaborate and actually focus on time-framing (time-making) and time-narration, however, not on ‘temporality’ in the technical sense (see with regard to Peace Studies, *inter alia* McMahon 2016; also representative of this misconception is Mueller 2016). These debates should therefore speak of time dimensions, time perspectives, or time horizons and thus of ‘historic’ and ‘transient’ rather than of ‘temporal’ dimensions. In how far both understandings interrelate would need careful consideration elsewhere.

gotiated and debated. Thus, their de-essentialisation turns them into a positive force for peaceful relations.

Early phenomenologists and temporality

Motion and transformation are, for example, fundamental in Simmel when he theorizes about the individual and society. The conviction that motion and transformation are fundamental criteria of society is clearly communicated by the title of one of his main writings – *Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (1908).⁸ Referring to this book, we recognize from the German „*Vergesellschaftung*” Simmel’s emphasis on the processes of becoming which is expressed in the grammatical ending „-ung”. We see here that society is always the product of a process of motion, fluctuation, change, and transience. Society is fundamentally a historic formation (“*ein historisches Gebilde*”) in that there were not just one presence, but rather the past and distinct cultural, political, and economic legacies become conditions of *each* presence, inherent in the process of becoming.⁹ The same notion of becoming does, however, not only apply to social formations but, as

⁸ This book has not yet been translated into English. The title would be something like *Inquiries into forms of sociation*; see further two (also untranslated) articles: “*Beiträge zur Philosophie der Geschichte*” (1909; would be: “Essays on the philosophy of history”) and “*Vom Wesen des historischen Verstehens*” (1918; ditto: “On the nature of historical understanding”).

⁹ This important, early argument may be quoted in full in its German version: „*Dies macht die Gesellschaft zu einem, seinem inneren Wesen nach, historischen Gebilde, d.h. sie ist nicht nur ein Gegenstand der Geschichte, sondern die Vergangenheit hat in ihr noch wirksame Realität ... in der Form der gesellschaftlichen Überlieferung wird das Geschehen zum Bestimmungsgrunde des Gegenwärtigen*” (1909). In English this would be: „This turn society into an inherently historical constellation, i.e., it is not only an ‘object’ of history, but the past is always lively present in the

Simmel argues in *“Vom Wesen des historischen Verstehens”*, it also applies to the human being as an individual. Here he argues decisively against the idea of the person as a fixed substance which would, and could, be characterized by something called ‘identity’. Instead, the individual always traverses an unending lively development (*“eine lebendige Entwicklung”*). In this context we find Simmel’s strongest argument against historicism, the dominant form of historiography in the 19th century. Especially, he argues against Leopold von Ranke’s dictum that the purpose of historiography is to demonstrate how history actually ‘was’ and how single events would have truly been (*„wie es eigentlich gewesen sei”*). Simmel criticizes this notion of history as a chimera.¹⁰

But Simmel goes further. He declares that the notion of becoming is the epistemic condition for the understanding of history. This is a logical consequence of his criticism of historicism, and it is remarkable that he has asserted this point some nine years before the publication of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Simmel develops his argument by accentuating not only *how* understanding has to be aware of processes of becoming, but he also argues *that* understanding itself is sustained and carried by processes and movements. Only because of these sustaining and carrying processes and movements, history and life in general would be tangible to our understanding and become tangible only by methods of understanding, i.e. by interpretation and hermeneutics.¹¹

presence. As social heritage the past becomes the conditioning ground for the presence” (translation by the author).

¹⁰ Very instructive here is also Vierhaus (1977).

¹¹ Simmel notes: *“Die stetige Bewegtheit des Lebens ist der formale Träger des Verständnisses (...) von Sachgehalten, die ihrerseits das lebendig konkrete Vorkommen dieser Sachgehalte erst verständlich machen”* (Simmel 1918; also 1980, 1977). In English this would be: „The permanent

Understanding is thus only possible because it is aware of historical processes of motion and transformation with regard to its 'object' and because, consequently, it is itself a process of becoming. Understanding thus grasps the historic nature of its 'object' and, as this object is permanently transforming in time, understanding has to become transformative, too, to correspond to its 'object'. A static and identitarian understanding of the world, for instance, would not understand and mismatch the world around it which is moving and transforming while it itself remains obsolete; and in the worst, but likely case turns violent as it attempts to render things fixed which are indeed in motion. At the same time this means, however, that understanding, just as the world around it, is never terminated and finished, but is itself an endless exegetic process of unveiling, unmasking, interpreting, and creating meaning.

However, this implies that understanding is never fully possible. If understanding is a process itself, and it is engaged in grasping the meaning of phenomena which are themselves in motion, the human mind can only accomplish fractional and partial understandings of those phenomena. The phenomena are always fluctuating and thereby are transforming their appearances and articulations as they present themselves to the human experience, like a flip-book: snapshots and sectionality which, however, are the constituents of our understanding. And there are two reasons for the sectionality of our understanding and cognition: society and the individual are principally historical and transformative; and the nature of understanding, focusing on such transformativities, is itself conditioned, limited, and shaped by them.

We find the same argument about temporality in Schütz. He sees that the social and political world is 'not a world of being, but a world that is at every moment one of becoming and pass-

motion of our lives is the carrier for/the condition of our understanding of 'things' which itself makes possible the existence of these things in the first place" (translation by the author).

ing away – or better, an emerging world’ (Schütz 1972, 36). In his *Phenomenology of the Social World* (1972), Schütz refers to Simmel to identify two main problems of the social sciences: first, what he calls the problem of “*Verstehen*” (or understanding and hermeneutics) in general; and, secondly and more specifically, ‘the way in which the other self is meaningfully given to us’ (1972, 19). The question of difference is thus not only related to motion, but very importantly, too, to the multiplicity and to our constitution of meaning (which is, however, also embedded in motion and development).

In order to advance the question of how meaning is constituted, Schütz refers to the idea of the intentionality of action. For Schütz meaning is constituted by social and political action and interaction. He notes, ‘(meaning) is thus constituted as an intersubjective phenomenon’ (1972, 32/33) and, on the part of each actor involved, indicates the actor’s attitude toward, as well as awareness and appreciation of, his/her own duration which becomes experienced in and through action. In other words, we find temporality at the very basis of an ontology of ‘a world that is being constituted, never completed, but always in the process of formation’ (1972, 36). The experience of the emergence, historicity, and transience of all being – social, political, and individual – has the same epistemic condition for understanding and knowledge as in Simmel. In short: our understanding of the social and political world is bound to, and rests upon, time and change and must be aware of this. It is rooted in ‘internal time-conscious-ness’ (ibid.); i.e., it is, and should be, aware of the historic and thus transformative nature of all things political and social, and must proactively base our relation to the world on time and change. This means, however, that by and through consciousness and activity, our relation to the world temporalizes and is temporal. Before discussing the temporality of acting in some greater detail, another quote which highlights the transience and transformation of being helps our understanding:

What we, in fact, experience in duration is not a being that is discrete and well-defined but a constant transition from a now-thus to a new now-thus (1972, 45).¹²

The way in which Schütz develops the relation between temporality, action, and meaning is through the figure of *modo future exacti*. Most basically, *modo future exacti* points to an ambiguity in the term and concept of action. This ambiguity consists of the circumstance of multiple dimensions of temporality and temporal imagination inherent in the concept of action itself. This multidimensionality speaks out against imaginations of teleological and linear time. Rather action implies two very different meanings both of which must be understood as crucial for the constitution of meaning in the social and political world. This is why understanding and meaning are fundamentally bound to temporality. They are themselves modes of being-in-time. Schütz argues that, first, action can refer to an act as a “completed unit” (1972, 39), a finished product (he describes this as “*Handlung*”); and second, action refers to the course of an action during which it is constituted and comes into being. As such, action, as Schütz says, would be “a flow, an ongoing sequence of events” (ibid.) and always something “enacted” (“*ein Gehandelt-worden-sein*”).

In this second dimension, action involves anticipation of the future. It is future-directed and planned into a future with and in every step and moment that it evolves. This directedness into the future and the very circumstance of being anticipated is, in the words of Schütz, ‘transformation of this Now into a Has-Been ... (The) planned act bears the temporal character of pastness’ (1972, 61). Therefore, every action has the character of a draft, project, and plan, anticipat-

¹² See hereto also Michael Shapiro who speaks of only momentary and transient “here and nows” (1992) as there would be no structure, essence, or identity. All we have are continually transforming appearances (“transformativity” rather than “identity” as argued in Behr, 2014), exploring their emergence and developments via genealogies, and acting towards them in dialogical empathy.

ing the course of action and thereby turning each present moment into anticipated pasts prior to the manifestation of the action at some future point. There is, however, another consequence of these two temporal dimensions of action which is important for thinking and speaking of difference. Namely, what are implications and consequences of these temporalities for the perspectivity, complexity, and heterogeneity of the social and political world? Schütz writes that the social world “is given to us in a complex system of perspectives” (1972, 8). These perspectives not only emerge in every individual with regard to his/her own action, but much more in all intersubjective social actions. A multitude of projects, anticipations, and articulations of actions emerge and vanish in complex interactions.

From the early phenomenologists to Lévinas and Derrida

The nexus of temporality, perspectivity, meaning, and social and political action implies a critique of traditional Western ontology. Within the 20th Century phenomenological discourse we can trace this critique back into the 1918-article “*Vom Wesen des historischen Verstehens*” by Simmel. In this article, Simmel criticizes and dismisses (what he calls) the Greek style of thought. Its firm substantialism would be unified in the belief that only identical substances could recognize and identify each other. He terms this a ‘naïve mechanistic dogma’ as if the imagination and ‘its’ object were two units which could be and needed to be brought in full swing. As it becomes obvious, this is diametrical to the nexus of temporality, perspectivity, meaning, and social and political action. And Simmel, as a phenomenologist, perceives of this kind of firm substantialism as an irrational traditionalism. In his metaphorically rich language, Simmel describes this kind of traditional epistemic naivety as the illusion of things real becoming constituted in our brain and their projection by some esoteric procedure in an empty space completely reserved for this projection – comparable to moving furniture in an empty flat.

Within the movement of phenomenological social and political theory, we observe a fundamental radicalisation of the temporal thinking from early phenomenologists to the work of Lévinas and Derrida. Both break with the notion of intentionality that supposes an epistemological relation between 'subject' and 'object' that is, according to them, characteristic of Western philosophy. Both argue that the temporalized nature of 'things' leads to a situation in which we cannot grasp and hold on to things. Therefore, our claim to *understand* something would be misleading; what can at most be accomplished is limited apprehension and empathy. Opposite to more orthodox discourses on 'otherness' (such as by Munasu Duala M'Bedy (1977)), which are also critical of Western philosophical history, Lévinas is not interested in, and does not deem possible, any kind of restoration of, and re-connection to, sources of Western philosophy. Rather he focuses on the development of an original and basic philosophy of openness – or: of infinity and exteriority ("*infinité*" and "*extériorité*"; see Lévinas 1979 [1961]). According to Lévinas, the main problem of Western philosophy would be symbolized in the primacy of the 'self' which delivers the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical framework for understanding all other individuals. Thereby the 'other' would inevitably become reduced to the 'self' and his/her experiences which symbolizes the vertical and hierarchical conception of difference mentioned in the beginning of the paper as the crucial problematic underpinning a reconceptualization of "peace-in-difference". This is a reduction which is itself the result of Western essentialist ontology which Lévinas calls 'ontological imperialism' and 'egology' (1979), i.e. an explanation, exploration, interpretation ("*logos*"), and acting upon the world from the vantage point of the 'self'.¹³ It is on this basis that

13 For a discussion of his criticism of Western philosophy see also "Is Ontology Fundamental?" (1951); here in Lévinas 1996.

‘peace’, which is based on such a vertical ‘self’-‘other’-relation, was termed “imperial peace” above.

At the basis of such an ontological imperialism and egology is, as Lévinas argues, finally the idea of intentionality which pervades Western thinking and still be key to Husserl’s philosophy in his *Méditations Cartésiennes* (1965 [1931]) as well as in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Lévinas identifies intentionality as exactly the very figure of thought which is responsible for ontological imperialism and egology. Intentionality would assume the existence of a correlation between *noesis* and *noema*, i.e. between ‘subject’ and ‘object’, between recognizing consciousness and the ‘thing’ recognized, and thus would presuppose a chronological simultaneity and synchronism between the ‘self’ and everything exterior. Lévinas’s fundamental criticism of intentionality appears as a consequence of a temporalized ontology. It dissolves and renders impossible synchrony and simultaneity because of the genuine openness, transformativity, transience, and processuality of being. Lévinas appears as having followed the idea of temporality consequently through and as having brought the consequence of temporality to a forceful end. In an article from 1964, “Meaning and Sense”, Lévinas notes – not dissimilar to Simmel – that “(the) intelligible is not conceivable outside of the becoming” and that “the world [is to be conceived] in its fundamental historicity” (Lévinas 1996b, 42, 43). This picture of being as permanent fluctuation, change and transformation forbids him to speak of manifestations of Being, rather he speaks of a “temporal series of articulations and expressions of being-in-time” (Lévinas, 1996, 66).

In declining intentionality, Lévinas creates the basis for the possibility of an unprecedented thinking of openness (or of infinity). Setting the ‘thing observed’ free from assumptions about its Being, and delivering the categories of its cognition – precisely through breaking with the idea of intentionality and its transcendental correlation between observer and thing – Lévinas develops this liberation and the related idea of a dialogical towards the ‘other’ (rather than claiming

knowledge of the 'other'). It is thus precisely the abolishment of intentionality which creates a relation of each 'self' of towards the 'other'; but, we have to ask, what is this towards and what is its reference object (if at all, we can even speak of an 'object' under conditions of non-intentionality)? Lévinas puts this question himself, asking: how is this relation-less relation (this 'rapport sans rapport')? At this point, we can receive important support through Derrida's notions of 'advent'.

Derrida's notion of 'advent' – albeit we encounter typical Derridean jargon here, he is very helpful to reflect upon the problematic of 'otherness', difference, and peace – provides more specific ideas with regards to what it is that is to come in the processes of becoming. His notion of 'advent' is helpful here and is most explicit in his writings about democracy and Europe (the latter especially in *The Other Heading*, 1992). In both cases, the event – i.e. democracy and/or Europe – is not yet there as he says, but something 'that remains to be thought and to come' (Derrida 1993, 19). Derrida uses the French "*à venir*" and "*survenir*" to describe this situation of 'yet to be'. The French "*survenir*" contains a meaning which seems to be important as it links with his emphasis on the temporality and transformativity of being (which seems, however, lost in the English translation "to come about" (as in *Psyche. Inventions of the Other*; 2007, 24)): the distinct meaning of "*survenir*" is that something, an e-vent comes about *suddenly, unexpectedly, and unpredictably*. This terrain or space from where the event is coming is unknown, undefined, and undefinable. Otherwise, it would not come about in a sudden and unpredictably.

To keep this terrain unknown or undefined, and thus to preserve the suddenness of the coming about of the e-vent (of democracy, of Europe; and, for our matters, of the 'other') is normatively purposeful, since it will preserve its transformativity to the highest possible degree. To do otherwise, i.e. to foreclose the openness and namelessness of the terrain from where the event is coming from would mean 'to totalize, to gather, *versammeln*' (Derrida 1997, 13). It would be a

form of 'monogenealogy' (Derrida 1992, 10) and depend upon and reproduce the "contagious or contaminating powers of a reappropriating language, (...) the language of the Same that is foreign or allergic to the Other" (Derrida 2007, 155). To preserve openness, namelessness, and dialogue and thereby the (chance of) transformativity of the event (i.e. also of the 'other') is crucial, since it means to "prevent totalitarianism, nationalism, egocentrism" (Derrida 1997, 14).

When democracy, Europe, or the 'other' are called events to come which remain to be thought, this does not mean that there would not be democratic and/or European institutions or experienced differences among individuals. Rather it suggests that preserving a critical space of openness for their free, unpredicted, and non-forestalled development and discursive articulation is a very deliberate and normative choice. This choice is convinced of the normative value of democracy/Europe/the 'other'/difference(s) to remain open towards the future. Their value is exactly (in) their openness. Their option to be and to let be is precisely their provision of, and their demand for, opened-up spaces for different modes of being and critical dialogue where those modes are not becoming pre-defined, pre-determined, and/or anticipated, but are being expected to approach, to emerge, to come about, and to transform suddenly and unexpectedly. The demands and value of democracy, the demands and value of Europe, and the demands of the 'other' 'consist in opening and destabilizing closed structures to allow for the passage toward the multiplicity and diversity of events. This openness is enabled to come through them; i.e., with regard to the question of 'otherness' and difference, 'one does not make the other come, one lets it come by preparing for its coming' (Derrida 2007, 45), for its advent.¹⁴

14 In *The Other Heading*, Derrida writes: "This *duty* also dictates opening Europe (...) opening it onto that which is not [and] never was (...) The *same duty* also dictates welcoming foreigners in order not only to integrate them but to recognize and accept their alterity (...) The *same duty* dic-

This choice for preserving a critical and dialogical space is, according to Derrida, grounded in the “aporetic experience of the impossible” (Derrida, 1993: 15). It proposes a reading of the question of ‘otherness’ and difference as *Dasein*, i.e. as not an entity or essence, but rather as a being-possible and becoming-possible (according to Heidegger, ‘*das Möglichsein*’ and ‘*das Möglichwerden*’); as a being which ‘trembles in [from, and towards] an unstable multiplicity’ (Derrida 1993, 9) and which therefore demands the *making-possible* of Being as *Dasein*.¹⁵ The ‘aporetic experience of the impossible’ assumes the intrinsic disunity of, and differences within, all things (histories, identities, cultures, institutions groups, and individual psyches) as well as the proactive elaboration on, and widening of, respective disunities and their mutual tensions as critical practice. What Derrida calls deconstruction and ‘*différance*’ is important here inasmuch as they refer to deferrals, dislocations, and disruptions of all things (mainly identities in our regard) precisely due to their intrinsic disunities, contradictions, and tensions. Derrida notes:

‘There is no culture or cultural identity without this difference *within itself*’ (Derrida 1992, 9, 10); or: ‘(The) identity of a culture is a way of being different from itself; a culture is different from itself; language is different from itself; the person is different from itself’ (1997, 13).

In *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), Derrida describes *différance* also as an activity of “temporization” (p. 9) and “spacing” (ibid.).

tates cultivating the virtue of such *critique, of the critical idea, the critical tradition*, but also submitting it, beyond critique and questioning, to a deconstructive genealogy that thinks and exceeds it without yet compromising it” (Derrida 1992: 77).

¹⁵ A *making-possible* of being in multiplicity links back to democracy and (Derrida’s vision of) Europe as spaced for this making-possible.

The question asked above about what is the referent 'object' of the 'self' in its motion towards the 'other' and of difference(s) in their relation each other receives a phenomenological answer here. The aporia (impasse) of unity and essence as both an ontological and a normative demand asks and longs for the opening up of dialogical spaces that make possible to think the impossible (as the unknown, intangible, unintentional, undefinable, or unpredictable). The impossible is here understood as unknown *what* the 'other' may be and as the terra incognita *from where* the 'other' may come from and suddenly appear ('advent') as 'naked face' (Lévinas). This out of the sudden and complete masking of the 'other' is of course not always the case, but it may be a possibility (and indeed seems to be the case very often). Thus, the ontological and normative demand is neither to work within the framework of totalities, nor to work against them and to 'move out of the impasse' (Derrida 1993, 13), i.e. to either accept their rationalities or to oppose and destroy them from outside. Instead, it demands the disruption of totalities by elaborating on, widening, and negotiating their *inherent* tensions and dis-unities through dialogue. Such disruptions open up spaces for alternatives, shall prevent totalitarianisms, nationalism, and ego-centrisms, and finally articulate the condition for the relation *towards* the 'other' as condition of peace.

It is here, in a critical perception of difference(s) and 'otherness' as transformative becoming where we find both the limits of, and conditions for, the deconstruction of Western traditions of peace thinking and peacebuilding practices as well as for a positive re-articulation of a dialogical understanding of peace. Such a perception produces and opens alternative spaces for the articulation of difference(s) and the advent of the 'other'.

To summarise: Why do temporality, transformation, and non-intentionality help us thinking difference in a non-hierarchical way? Temporality liberates difference(s) from proclamations about what they *are* or would *be*; they also set them free from declarations about why they are. Both temporality and non-intentionality therefore strongly suggest anti-essentialist views and ad-

vise us to listen to the 'other' before claiming knowledge *about* them. A *dialogical structure* is inherent here that does not make statements about difference(s) and the 'other' prior to having paid attention and having learned about the 'other' through listening to difference(s). What characterised hierarchical ways of thinking and acting upon differences, namely the stigmatisation of differences(s) as 'otherness' and their subordination under imaginations and categories of the 'self', becomes anathematic to a temporal and temporalized understanding of differences that avoid their essentialization as 'otherness' and would attend them in their own right. In conclusion of those theoretical considerations, I want to suggest the following proposition which operationalises the contribution of a phenomenological approach to peace research: *The lesser the degree of essentialist attributions to difference(s) and the lesser essentialist perceptions and definitions of 'otherness', the less likely the outbreak of conflict and the more conducive this is for peace, conflict solution, and reconciliation.*

However, one has to further investigate the practical implications of an emphatic approach to difference(s) for peace research to which the paper turns now, outlining the major implications.

(2) Difference and peace studies and practices

The most important practical implication that takes us straight to (re-thinking) peace is the appreciation of differences as *positive*. If we cannot – and should not – define the 'other' and his or her identity as someone or something definite and if we can only get momentary impressions of the 'other' whose nature is hidden from us, yet, as Morgan Brigg (2018) argues in this Special Issue, differences are something undeniable in society and politics and an irreducible, existential experience of human life ("crucial feature of life itself", as he argues), we are also practically advised to develop a way to appreciate them as positive and not as an obstacle to peaceful relations.

The practical value of a temporal and temporalized notion of ‘otherness’ and difference for re-thinking peace becomes thus immediately visible. The vast majority of peace thinking in Western philosophy, peace studies, and International Relations, and of peace practice by international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union have been based on the dictum of assimilating differences. Difference into unity (“*E Pluribus Unum*”) is the famous motto here (see for more detail on this Behr 2014) which ultimately negates difference(s) for the sake of unity and under a universal script of identity and political order. To create pathways to peace, the concept of “peace-in-difference” presented here is suggesting precisely the opposite. Not the assimilation or ultimate nullification of difference(s), but their emphatic cultivation and dialogical negotiation, based upon an anti-essentialist approach to difference(s), are the way to peace.

Thus, “peace-in-difference” is critical of conceptualizations of ‘liberal peace’, its institutions and its Kantian (in theoretical terms; see [1784] 1970; 1795) and Wilsonian (in more practical terms; see 1966, 2006) legacies that become epitomised in the contemporary ‘democratic peace hypothesis’ and its strategies of international democratization in the Western image (so in Russett 2001, for instance). ‘Liberal peace’ is indeed the representative of a universal script – by and large composed of Western notions of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and free market economies – that is imposed in global conflict settings in order to conquer and overcome differences, promoting the perception and stigmatization of all actors, cultures, and peoples outside the ‘self’, as different and as the ‘other’. Respective thought and practices become most visible in politics of the US administrations under George Bush and Bill Clinton, under the UK governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, and in UN and EU peace building politics over the last 25 years (Björkdahl et al. 2011). This legacy has also come under severe attack from a post-liberal peace approach suggested by Oliver Richmond and others for 10 years (see *inter alia* Autessere 2014; MacGinty 2010, 2011; Richmond 2008, 2010, 2011) with which the concept of “peace-in-difference” shares

this criticism. However, a “peace-in-difference” perspective suggests a novel epistemology and ontology of peace thinking and peace practice that a post-liberal perspective does not include in its, yet very important, critique and suggestions to overcome “liberal peace”. Post-liberal peace is thus concentrating mainly on new practices as an hybrid blend of Western and local peace building instruments that is conceptually based on a Foucauldian and post-colonial critique of Western, statist politics and its discursive and institutional power apparatus; without, however, an own theoretical (i.e., ontological and/or epistemological) and normative foundation that would go beyond critique. In this vein, criticism has emerged recently with regard to a new essentialism in post-liberal peace concepts, namely that of a dichotomist binary between ‘the local’ and ‘the international’ (see, for instance, Nadarajah and Rampton 2015; see also, Bargués-Pedreny and Mathieu 2018, in the Introduction to this Special Issue).¹⁶

This ‘going-beyond’ is, however, hoped to be part of a “peace-in-difference” approach according to which peace, just as ‘otherness’ or difference(s), cannot be fixed and cannot be defined. Rather peace is to be seen as a permanent process of, and dialogue about, the articulation and meaning(s) as well as a critical reflection upon difference(s) as they become expressed in political, social, and cultural conflicts. This process primarily consists of *neutralising essentialist thinking and action* that are based upon defining, stereo-typing, and pigeonholing political perceptions and world views. This includes the exploration of processes of identity formation, and, if necessary, their active reorientation towards anti-essentialist ‘self’ and ‘other’-perceptions.

Such exploration and engagement would, next to the study of Western peacebuilding approaches, focus on the study of forms of local, culturally-situated knowledge, i.e. local ontologies

¹⁶ For the post-liberal framing of the local-international dichotomy, see *inter alia* Kappler et al. 2015.

and epistemologies of communities as they underlie visions and practices of political and social order and scrutinize them, just like Western ones, according to their essentialist and non-essentialist character respectively. Those forms of knowledge and everyday practices of local communities that are directly involved in conflict and reconciliation are deemed more legitimate than Western, universalized peacebuilding policies implanted into and imported from outside. However, these must be conducive to peace – following the argument proposed here – and of de-essentialised or de-essentialising character, too. The following kind of questions would populate a “peace-in-difference” agenda.

- How are perceptions of difference and ‘otherness’ in peace-building, peace negotiation, and conflict reconciliation processes discursively framed?
- Are difference(s) and the ‘other’ seen as ‘natural’ enemies, are their characteristics essentialized (according to ethnic, national, religious, political, gender, etc. criteria), and are they stigmatized *a priori*?
- What patterns follow ‘self’-‘other’-relations and definitions?
- Can distinct features of the ‘self’-‘other’-relation be learned from successful peace formation, peace negotiation, and conflict reconciliation processes? And *vice versa*, can failed peace negotiation, peace-building, and conflict reconciliation processes be traced back to distinct perceptions and framings of the ‘self’-‘other’ relation?
- How and through what channels can a phenomenological approach to peace practically be communicated with conflict and warring parties?

(3) Conclusions

“Peace-in-difference” pursues, next to its critique of essentialist (i.e., mainly of universal liberal-teleological, but also of post-liberal) approaches to peacebuilding and peace formation

respectively, the interrogation *and* interlocation of different ontologies and epistemologies in specific conflict contexts and involved actors. This does neither include the uncritical reception of Western or local identities, visions and practices, many of them ultimately involved in violent conflicts and faced with the demand to reconcile and re-build society and politics, nor their eventual dichotomy between them and Western modes of thinking. Thus, there is no dualism between 'Western' and 'local' politics, however, a clear choice exists and a distinction can and must be made between productive, i.e., non-essentialist/de-essentialising, and counterproductive, i.e., essentialist/essentialising, ontologies and epistemologies of difference. "Peace-in-difference" offers guidance on how actors involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes may cooperate to create more sustainable pathways to peace. In this regard, I remind of the aforementioned proposition: *The lesser the degree of essentialist attributions to difference(s) and the lesser essentialist perceptions and definitions of 'otherness', the less likely the outbreak of conflict and the more conducive this is for peace, conflict solution, and reconciliation.*¹⁷ One may also consider and explore the circumstance that conflicts and violence broke out precisely because of the essentialised perception and framing of difference(s) in the first place.

This proposition operationalises practically the phenomenological approach to "peace-in-difference" and the research questions derived at the end of the previous section. At the same

¹⁷ There may be individual and temporary exceptions of this general proposition where conflict parties have to affirm a certain identity, for example, to gather and position themselves to be listened to and thus as a condition to mobilise and voice their political ideas. This can be called "strategic essentialism". See originally Spivak 1988 who, however, disapproved of her term later because of its instrumental deployment in theory and practice (see Spivak 2007). For this discussion see also very interesting Benhabib, Butler et al. 1995.

time – and here lies its epistemological advantage over other, mainly post-colonial, post-liberal, and other so-called critical approaches to peacebuilding which seem to embrace the local too undifferentiatedly – this proposition requests to scrutinise local constructions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ according to their possible essentialisations; just as this proposition and the phenomenological tradition is critical with identitarian Western thinking. On the macro-political scale, examples of non-Western essentialising identity discourses are Russian or Chinese discourses on civilization and empire (see critically for example Joergensen 2017; Katzenstein 2009; Shih/Yin 2013); on a macro-political, sociological level, we find all kinds of identity politics by state and societal actors in local conflicts who propagate fixed narratives of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in teleological, gendered, securitising, territorial, geo-political, etc. hierarchies (see instead of many Rigual 2018; Hagmann 2017; Basham 2016; with regard to narratives of belonging, see the forthcoming edition of Behr/Roesch 2019). A “peace-in-difference” approach would consequently demand and advocate the conceptual and practical de-essentialisation of Western, non-Western, local, macro- and micro-political perceptions and constructions of difference.

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